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Chair: Ms. Halperin-Kaddari (Vice-Chair)

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Romania

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In the absence of Ms. Leinarte (Chair), Ms. Halperin-Kaddari (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Romania (CEDAW/C/ROU/7-8; CEDAW/C/ROU/QPR/7-8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Romania took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania), introducing the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Romania (CEDAW/C/ROU/7-8), said that her Government had reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by making gender equality a priority issue and devoting an entire chapter of its governance programme for 2017-2020 to women's rights. President Iohannis was among the 10 global leaders to become a champion of gender equality under the UN-Women "HeForShe" campaign. Moreover, upon becoming a member State of the European Union in 2007, Romania had acquired the rights and obligations arising from European Union treaties and the entire *acquis communautaire*, including those stemming from the European Union directives on gender equality.

3. A stable institutional mechanism was in place, namely, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which was responsible for promoting equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men and for preventing and combating gender-based violence. The priority placed by the Government on fostering inter-agency cooperation and ensuring the involvement of civil society organizations had also yielded results: an interministerial committee on preventing and combating domestic violence had been established pursuant to article 10 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), which Romania had ratified in 2016; and a number of cooperation agreements had been signed with civil society organizations working in the fields of gender equality and gender-based violence.

4. A national strategy on gender equality and domestic violence was currently being developed by the Government in cooperation with representatives of civil society, the relevant ministries and local administrations, and the country's first project on gender budgeting was in the pipeline. Since 2015, a national gender equality day had been commemorated every year on 8 May, kick-starting a week-long series of activities designed to promote equal opportunities and awareness of the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, Romania had been actively involved on the international stage, hosting a side event on gender mainstreaming at the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2016; becoming a member of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity; providing expertise within the framework of a European Union twinning project to support the implementation of gender equality in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and hosting the forthcoming International Organization of la Francophonie world conference, on the role of women in economic development.

5. Law No. 217/2003, on preventing and combating domestic violence, was to be amended so as to harmonize its provisions with the Istanbul Convention and, in particular, to provide for the use of emergency protection orders allowing for the aggressor to be removed from the home in situations of immediate danger. Psychological violence had been defined as an offence that was punishable with up to a year in prison, a fine or, in some cases, community service. Various projects to tackle domestic violence had been developed by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. For example, local centres and rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence were being set up with financial support from Norway. The National Agency had also conducted awareness-raising campaigns on domestic violence, in partnership with a large supermarket chain, and disseminated information about a toll-free telephone line put in place to help combat domestic violence. With regard to combating sexual violence, the National Agency

was working in cooperation with other organizations to carry out the "Justice Has No Gender" project to educate younger generations on gender-based violence and gender equality. Eight rape crisis centres were due to be set up through partnerships with county hospitals. Under the new Criminal Code, which had been in force since 2014, all forms of human trafficking, including trafficking for the purposes of exploitation, child pornography, slavery and pimping, were outlawed.

6. Regarding women's participation in political and public life, two bills had been drafted with a view to establishing a 30 per cent gender quota on party lists in both parliamentary and local elections. In fact, between 2012 and 2016, the number of women members of parliament had increased from 12 per cent to 21 per cent and the number of women mayors had risen by 25 per cent.

7. The principle of non-discrimination in the field of education had been incorporated into law in 2011 and applied to all educational levels, including tertiary education and lifelong learning. Efforts were also being made to include a gender perspective and to cover issues such as gender-based violence in academic curricula at all levels. There were, however, many challenges still to be addressed, including reducing the dropout rate and improving the retention rate in schools. That said, a package of measures had been introduced to provide additional support to pupils, in particular those whose parents were working abroad. For example, a free after-school programme offering remedial classes and leisure activities had been introduced for primary and secondary school children, as had free school transport. Children from vulnerable groups were entitled to free school meals and school materials. In addition, one per cent of State university places were ring-fenced every year for Roma students, thereby encouraging them to study and embark on a successful career.

8. In the field of health, considerable efforts had been made since 2006 to improve the health of women and children in Romania. For example, a number of national programmes had been rolled out to improve family planning and maternal health, and a comprehensive national strategy on health had been adopted in 2014 to enhance health-care services at all levels of care. In view of the major health-care challenges arising from an ageing population, the Government had allocated the equivalent of 4 per cent of the country's gross domestic product to the health sector in 2016 and was committed to further future investment.

9. Lastly, a range of measures had been taken with the aim of eliminating discrimination in other areas of women's lives. For instance, the National Strategy for Employment for 2014-2020 contained specific measures to increase women's participation in the labour market by providing childcare facilities, promoting flexible working arrangements and combating gender stereotypes and the gender pay gap, among other things. Initiatives such as means-tested allowances and other social assistance measures were also being implemented to tackle poverty and foster social inclusion, including that of the Roma population.

Articles 1 to 6

10. **Ms. Hofmeister**, while welcoming the fact that the Romanian Constitution was largely in line with the Convention, said it was regrettable that intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination were not taken into account anywhere in the State party's legal system. Moreover, the legal definitions of rights were vague, while the consequences of violating those rights were often inadequate and laws were not properly enforced, all of which served only to engender public mistrust of the legal system and its ability to uphold their rights. The human rights situation in Romania seemed to have deteriorated over the past decade: no framework was in place for gender mainstreaming or gender budgeting; no financial support was provided to women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and the Romanian Institute for Human Rights was not in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). In that light, she wished to know what specific steps were being taken or were envisaged to ensure de jure and de facto equality of women; what measures were being implemented with a view to identifying and eliminating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination; and what was being done to bring the status of the country's

national human rights institution into line with the Paris Principles. Lastly, she asked whether the Romanian Government intended to formulate a national action plan to implement the recommendations of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

11. **Ms. Dimitrescu** (Romania) said that, under Law No. 202/2002 on equal opportunities for women and men, a number of mechanisms had been established to handle complaints from persons who had been victims of gender discrimination. Complainants could also have their cases referred to the courts. For example, in cases of gender-based discrimination in the workplace, the process usually involved mediation, after which, if the grievance remained unresolved, it could be referred to the relevant court. It was worth pointing out that there was a reversal of the burden of proof in discrimination cases, meaning that the onus was on the accused to disprove that discrimination had occurred. The National Council for Combating Discrimination conducted statistical analysis of the complaints received.

12. **Ms. Petrescu** (Romania) said that, in accordance with the Code of Civil Procedure, anyone who wished to do so could bring a complaint of gender-based discrimination before the courts. The Code of Criminal Procedure also contained provisions that enabled individuals to file petitions with the prosecution service if they felt that they had been subjected to discrimination. Article 21 of the Constitution, on free access to justice, stated that any person who had been discriminated against could file a complaint with either the civil or the criminal courts.

13. Although the Constitution provided that all citizens were equal before the law, there were no clear provisions concerning direct or indirect discrimination. The issue of equality between men and women was addressed in Law No. 303/2004, which required judges and prosecutors to respect the principle of equality of men and women before the law. Law No. 567/2004 imposed the same obligation on the auxiliary staff of courts. Moreover, article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provided that any discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sex, was prohibited.

14. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that, through a partnership established with the Norwegian ombudsman, plans were being developed to implement a gender perspective in public policy and in spheres of activity in which it was important to respect the principle of equality between men and women. Although gender budgeting had not yet been introduced, plans to do so were being considered in partnership with NGOs. As a first step, gender budgeting was due to be applied in the area of local policymaking in the city of Iași.

15. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that the proposed amendments to Law No. 202/2002 and Law No. 217/2003 would bring about a paradigm shift in relation to discrimination, equal opportunities and domestic violence. The amendment of the former would introduce a gender perspective while the amendment of the latter would bring it into line with the Istanbul Convention. The amendments to Law No. 217/2003 would rely on two major pillars of the Constitution, articles 16 and 22, which concerned equality of rights and the right to physical and mental integrity.

16. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that the Government would shortly be amending Law No. 202/2002, which, as a framework law, was the most important piece of legislation relating to gender equality. One of the most significant of the planned amendments would ensure that all public and publicly funded institutions appointed a gender expert, with specific functions, to be responsible for promoting a gender perspective in the institution concerned.

17. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that, at the local level, county committees for equal opportunities had been established to address cases of gender discrimination and domestic violence. A government decision had been taken to strengthen the county committees, which would be able to use budgets allocated by local authorities to identify, manage and resolve cases of gender-based discrimination and domestic violence.

18. **The Chair**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that she would welcome further information on the timelines for the pilot programme for gender budgeting in local communities and for the amendment to Law No. 202/2002 that would establish gender

experts. Commending the State party on its recognition of the concept of intersectional discrimination, she asked for information on court cases in which the concept had been invoked and for statistics relating to that form of discrimination. Lastly, she asked the delegation to comment on reports that the Ministry of Finance had refused to provide a budget for two national programmes designed to increase collaboration between government agencies and civil society.

19. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that the adoption of the proposed amendments to Law No. 202/2002 and Law No. 217/2003 was one of the objectives set out in the governance programme for 2017-2020. As the amendments in question were a priority for the Government, it had committed to debating them by October 2017 at the latest.

20. The amendment to Law No. 202/2002 had been proposed in order to ensure that financial support for gender equality was provided by the local public authorities. Once it had been approved, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men would communicate the details of the organizational changes to the county councils, after which it would be possible for partnerships to be established between NGOs and local public authorities. An example of good practice in the area of partnerships was provided by an emergency shelter for women that had been established in Bucharest. It was a government-run shelter funded under an agreement with Bucharest City Hall. The Government intended to replicate that partnership elsewhere in the country.

21. **Ms. Dimitrescu** (Romania) said that institutions were empowered to punish the perpetrators of discriminatory acts. In 2016, for example, the labour inspectorate, acting in accordance with Law No. 202/2002, had conducted 21,120 inspections and issued 21 warnings and one fine. In order to ensure that employees enjoyed equal opportunities in the workplace and were aware of their rights, sanctions were imposed on employers who failed to introduce provisions against gender-based discrimination in their rules and regulations, failed to keep employees continuously informed of their right to enjoy equal opportunities and failed to apply legal provisions concerning the protection of mothers. Employees who violated the personal freedom of other employees were also punished.

22. **Ms. Petrescu** (Romania) said that the data currently available to the Ministry of Justice on cases of discrimination were not disaggregated by gender. However, plans were in place to address that shortcoming. Unfortunately, the Superior Council of the Judiciary was unable to specify the number of occasions on which judges had invoked the Convention during court proceedings.

23. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that the gender-budgeting project would be financed under the operational programme for the development of human capital. The corresponding project file had been submitted in partnership with NGOs in the county of Iași, the implementation team had been appointed and implementation was imminent. The Government was also working with NGOs and civil society networks to propose legislative changes that would bring Law No. 202/2002 into line with the Istanbul Convention.

24. The Ministry of Defence was working on the implementation of a national plan concerning Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The purpose of the plan was to increase the number of women assigned to peacekeeping operations outside Romania. The adoption of Law No. 53/2011 had made it mandatory for the military to participate in such operations. The Ministry of Defence also aimed to increase the number of women in both civilian and military decision-making positions and to increase interministerial cooperation and cooperation with NGOs and civil society. Plans were in place to ensure that individuals enjoyed equal opportunities and equal treatment in the workplace, received equal pay for equal work and enjoyed equal access to training, continuous education and opportunities for specialization.

25. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that the issue of cooperation with NGOs would be the key focus of the future actions of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and of the Agency's efforts to achieve the specific objectives for respect and dignity for women set out in the governance programme. For that reason, the Government had launched "Open Doors Week", during which one-to-one talks had been held with each of the representatives of the NGOs working in the fields identified in the Agency's mandate.

with a view to finding out more about the NGOs' work and identifying possible areas for cooperation.

26. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that, in accordance with the legal framework on the funding of NGOs, organizations that received funding had to be legal entities and accredited providers of social services. Chapter 8 of the governance programme, on social services, set out plans to reform the legislation on cooperation with private suppliers of social services and public-private partnerships and to regulate the funding of private social service providers.

27. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that, although an independent judicial system was well established in Romania, access to justice for women and girls, particularly in remote and rural areas, was often possible only with the assistance of NGOs. Although the State party had established a legal aid system, few cases of domestic violence were brought before the courts. Protection orders were a useful tool against such violence but there was little coordination between the courts and the police authorities to prevent further violence. Therefore, the victims of domestic violence could also be seen as victims of structural violence committed by the State. Mechanisms for the advancement of women's rights appeared to function well but had been short of funding since the onset of the global recession almost a decade earlier. In 2015, the Committee had attempted to address that issue with its general recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice.

28. She asked why the budget allocated to legal aid was so limited, whether NGOs were financially supported by the State, whether the Government intended to extend the provisions against domestic violence to cover male victims of such violence, what support was given to mothers when the father of their children was forced to leave the family home as a result of a protection order and whether the police would be empowered to remove violent perpetrators without, or prior to, the involvement of the courts. She would welcome information on the role played by NGOs in combating violence against women and on the collaboration between NGOs, the police and the courts.

29. **Ms. Petrescu** (Romania) said that access to justice was guaranteed under article 21 of the Constitution. In civil matters, legislation existed to ensure that anyone whose rights had been violated could bring a case before the courts. The Code of Civil Procedure ensured that the parties in civil trials enjoyed equal access to justice and established that discrimination was a violation of fundamental human rights. Under the Criminal Code, any individual who had been subjected to discrimination could file a petition with the prosecution service and bring a case before the courts. Acts carried out by civil servants to prevent victims from obtaining access to justice were criminalized and gender-based discrimination was considered to be an aggravating circumstance in relation to certain offences. Discrimination was prohibited under article 10 of the Criminal Code and amendments had been made to the Code to prohibit domestic violence and ensure that a gender perspective was taken into account in cases involving crimes against humanity.

30. **Mr. Petrescu** (Romania) said that the modus operandi adopted by the police when confronted with cases of domestic violence was regulated internally. Police officers were empowered to verify compliance with protection orders and to take any measures necessary to ensure compliance. The police had proposed amending Law No. 217/2003 on preventing and combating family violence to prohibit the withdrawal of complaints by victims of domestic violence, as the withdrawal of a complaint seriously hampered the ability of the police to take action against perpetrators. It remained to be seen whether that proposal would be taken up.

31. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that, in Romania, protection orders were regulated by Law No. 351/2015, which amended Law No. 217/2003 to introduce the requirement for requests for protection orders to be examined urgently and for a decision to be taken within 72 hours of the request being submitted. Protection orders therefore provided victims of domestic violence with adequate but not necessarily immediate protection as, although perpetrators of domestic violence were subject to temporary eviction, it could take up to 72 hours for the necessary protection order to be issued. While emergency protection orders did not exist per se, the possibility of a protection order being issued urgently was provided for in Law No. 351/2015. Emergency protection orders were also mentioned in the bill to

amend and supplement Law No. 217/2003 as part of the legislative package developed to give effect to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. Romania intended to follow the Austrian model of intervention in cases of domestic violence whereby perpetrators of domestic violence were evicted from the family home with immediate effect.

32. **Ms. Petrescu** (Romania) said that, until 2013, the Ministry of Justice had classed cases involving the issuance of protection orders as a form of family dispute and not as cases in their own right. Although the country's domestic legal framework already reflected the majority of the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, there was still a need to incorporate new provisions on forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

33. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that gender quotas were an essential tool for achieving women's full and equal participation in all sectors of society and their equitable representation in the public and political life of the country. Although the statistics provided by the State party were not comprehensive, it appeared that gender parity in representation had not yet been achieved in any area of public or political life. While she welcomed the affirmative action taken by the State party to guarantee Roma students equal access to higher education, she would be interested to know whether that affirmative action included a gender dimension. It would be useful to learn more about the obstacles preventing the achievement of gender parity at the senior management and decision-making levels in small and medium-sized enterprises and in the companies listed on the Romanian stock exchange. She asked how many of the Roma students who had gained admission to a higher education establishment as a result of the affirmative action taken by the State party were female and what stage had been reached in the discussions on the proposed 30 per cent gender quota for legislative bodies.

34. **Ms. Dimitrescu** (Romania) said that there were currently two bills proposing a compulsory 30 per cent quota for the representation of men and women in legislative bodies before the Chamber of Deputies, having already been passed by the Senate. Law No. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment for women and men required political parties to incorporate affirmative action for the underrepresented sex in their statutes and internal regulations so as to ensure gender balance among the candidates put forward for local and general elections and elections to the European Parliament. The aforementioned legislative initiatives were evidence of the Government's commitment to remedying the disparity between male and female representation in the country's political institutions. The National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men assisted in those efforts by collecting statistical data on the number of women occupying managerial or decision-making posts, or elected positions in legislative bodies. It was an undeniable fact that women were seriously underrepresented on the boards of Romanian companies. The percentage of women occupying board positions in Romania stood at 10 per cent, which was well below the European average of 24 per cent. In order to remedy that situation, the Government planned to incorporate provisions designed to increase women's representation on the boards of companies into corporate governance guidelines.

35. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that, during the 2012-2016 electoral cycle, there had been a significant improvement in women's representation at both the parliamentary and local levels. In addition to the near doubling of the number of women parliamentarians since 2012, the number of women serving on county councils had doubled, while the number of women serving on local councils had tripled. Furthermore, in 2016, Gabriela Firea had been elected the first female Mayor of Bucharest. She was committed to working with the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to promote women's empowerment and representation in managerial and decision-making positions within the local public administration. Although the 30 per cent gender quota for legislative bodies had not yet become law, it had been applied by at least one political party, which was evidence of a change in mindset among Romanian politicians. In the country's recently formed Government, 9 out of 27 ministers were women, 2 of whom occupied senior leadership positions.

36. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that some 550 places in higher education establishments had been awarded to Roma students as a result of the affirmative action taken by the Government and that 65 per cent of those places had been taken up by women. Of some 990 Roma school mediators pursuing ongoing training with the Ministry of

National Education, 60 to 67 per cent were women. Of the 7,000 persons enrolled in the "Second Chance" programme, which targeted young people and adults who had not completed their compulsory education, 60 per cent were Roma and of those 60 per cent, 45 per cent were women.

37. **Ms. Petrescu** (Romania) said that there were no barriers preventing women from pursuing a career in the judiciary, as confirmed by their high level of participation in the competitions for judges and prosecutors organized by the National Institute of the Judiciary. Of the 1,220 managerial positions in the judiciary, some 690 were held by women. According to data collected by the European Commission, the number of female judges sitting in ordinary courts and tribunals and in the high court had risen in recent years and was set to either remain steady or increase further.

38. **Mr. Filip** (Romania) said that gender parity had all but been achieved at the decision-making level in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as women occupied just under half the decision-making posts.

39. **The Chair**, speaking in her capacity as an expert, said that, in her experience, a quota of only 30 per cent for each gender on party lists, while laudable, was not sufficient to guarantee equal representation in legislative bodies once elections had taken place. She asked whether the State party had considered adopting the "zipper system", whereby male and female candidates appeared alternately on party lists.

40. **Ms. Dimitrescu** (Romania) said that the two bills before the Chamber of Deputies were proposing a compulsory quota of *at least* 30 per cent for each gender on party lists with a view to reaching gender parity over time. It was the Government's intention for the fulfilment of that quota to become a condition for the validation of electoral lists. The Central Election Bureau wished to incorporate gender equality provisions into its statutes, including a gender quota of at least 30 per cent for all candidate lists to ensure a balanced representation of men and women. It was hoped that all Romanian political parties would follow suit.

41. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that it was important to specify whether the 30 per cent gender quota was for electoral lists or for the elected positions available in legislative bodies as, during the 2016 election, some political parties had set and subsequently failed to meet a voluntary 40 per cent gender quota on account of it having applied only to their list of candidates. The formalization and correct application of the 30 per cent gender quota would undoubtedly help to achieve more equal representation in legislative bodies.

42. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that gender roles and stereotypes remained an integral part of Romanian culture, both in the public and private spheres, and were reinforced by the Orthodox Church, which wielded significant political influence and played a key role in shaping attitudes and contributing to the establishment of conservative patriarchal norms, especially in rural areas. A recent study on the linkages between religion and social norms showed that the Orthodox Church had brought its influence to bear to support a constitutional amendment that would redefine the foundation of the family as the consensual marriage between a man and woman only, thus excluding single parents and same-sex couples from that definition. She asked whether the State party had attempted to promote dialogue and cooperation with the Orthodox Church as part of its broader efforts to combat stereotypes regarding the role and responsibilities of women in Romanian society, to eliminate violence against women and to promote their sexual and reproductive health.

43. The Committee was concerned about the negative portrayal of women and girls, especially those from the Roma community, in the Romanian mass media and advertising companies. She asked what steps the State party had taken to involve the Romanian mass media in implementing the Convention and promoting the status of women in society. Outdated school textbooks and the absence of gender equality education also played a role in perpetuating negative stereotypes of Roma women. The Committee had also received reports that politicians often engaged in hate speech against the Roma population and were to blame for the low degree of acceptance of diverse sexual orientations. She would appreciate additional information on the measures taken to address negative gender stereotypes, including awareness-raising campaigns. The State party should also step up its efforts to promote gender equality within the education system, particularly as the

Committee had been informed that school curricula did not cover human rights or gender equality issues. It was regrettable that the State party had taken only limited measures to prevent child marriage, given its impact on the school attendance rate of Roma girls and the literacy rate of Roma women. It would be useful to learn more about the outcomes of the national gender equality strategy in the field of education.

44. **Ms. Acar**, noting that the legislative package designed to give effect to the provisions of the Istanbul Convention was still before parliament, asked what was preventing its enactment and when it might enter into force. It would also be useful to hear more about the political climate surrounding the package. Given the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, in Romania, she failed to understand why they were not criminalized. She asked why that was the case and whether the package covered all the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, particularly those dealing with the different forms of violence against women. A further cause for concern was the inadequate training provided to the personnel of State institutions involved in the fight against gender-based violence, including security and law enforcement officers, educators, health workers and members of the judiciary. She asked what percentage of the personnel working in those sectors had received training on how to deal with gender-based violence; whether the completion of such training was a qualifying requirement for recruitment or whether it was part of in-service training; and whether such training was compulsory and dispensed on a regular basis or optional and dispensed only sporadically.

45. She asked whether the bill to amend and supplement Law No. 217/2003, which would address, inter alia, the issue of emergency protection orders, would cover all forms of violence against women, including stalking and sexual violence, or simply domestic violence. It would also be helpful to know whether the bill would still require victims of domestic violence to provide proof of their mistreatment to obtain a protection order. The delegation might also indicate how compliance with protection orders was monitored and what action was taken when such orders were violated.

46. She had been dismayed to learn that women who were victims of domestic violence also needed to provide proof of abuse to gain admission to shelters. She asked whether that requirement was routinely enforced in practice. Moreover, she had been surprised to learn that the State party planned to build eight rehabilitation centres for perpetrators of domestic violence, while the protection services available to victims remained wholly inadequate. The delegation might comment on what could be perceived as a misplaced priority. It would also be useful to know whether shelters were accessible to all women in Romania, including women with disabilities and Roma women, and whether they were available in both urban and rural areas.

47. Lastly, she asked whether mediation services could be used in cases involving gender-based violence and, if so, whether the mediators in question received special training. Noting that the police had proposed amending Law No. 217/2003 to prohibit the withdrawal of complaints by victims of domestic violence, she asked whether the State party had considered the possibility of prosecuting cases of domestic violence ex officio in the absence of a complaint or in the event of a complaint being withdrawn.

48. **Ms. Leinarte** said that Romania continued to be a country of origin for human trafficking for the purpose of forced labour and sexual exploitation. However, the Committee had received reports that a new trend in human trafficking was emerging in the country, namely that of trafficking women with disabilities. The delegation might comment on the veracity of those reports. Recalling the plight of thousands of female farm workers in Sicily's Ragusa province who worked in conditions of forced labour and sexual exploitation, she asked the State party to describe the action taken to investigate the trafficking of women with disabilities and the outcome, if any, of the investigation. She had also been alarmed to learn that female minors accounted for up to 40 per cent of victims of sexual exploitation, which was higher than the European average. The Committee had been informed by alternative sources that police officers were often complicit in human trafficking offences and that, although human trafficking constituted a criminal offence, its characterization was such that perpetrators could incur more lenient penalties.

49. According to official data, there were some 800 women from the Philippines living in Romania. Those women often found themselves working as domestic servants in the houses of wealthy Romanians, in some cases without an employment contract, which exposed them to the risk of exploitation. She asked to what extent the rights of migrant workers were protected in Romania and what safeguards were in place to prevent them from falling victim to human traffickers.

50. Noting that prostitution did not currently constitute a criminal offence and that prostitutes were only liable to a fine under Romanian civil law, she said that it would be helpful to receive more information on the prevalence of abuse of prostitutes. The delegation might also comment on reports that law enforcement officers often refused to issue identity documents to prostitutes, thus precluding them from seeking alternative forms of employment. She asked whether it was possible for victims of trafficking to receive a temporary residence permit even if they refused to stand as witnesses in legal proceedings. Furthermore, the dearth of resources available to operationalize the recently established national referral mechanism had resulted in a lack of involvement in anti-trafficking initiatives at all levels. She asked how the State party intended to remedy that situation. A further cause for concern was the limited availability of services for victims of trafficking and the State party's reliance on NGOs to provide those persons with the necessary care and support. She was also under the impression that the anti-trafficking training dispensed to police officers, judges and labour inspectors was inadequate. The delegation should outline the State party's general approach to combating human trafficking, indicating how the fight against that phenomenon was coordinated and monitored and whether any regional cooperation agreements had been concluded.

51. **Ms. Cîrstea** (Romania) said that the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was holding discussions with the Ministry of Education aimed at introducing a gender perspective into school textbooks. Article 10 of the Convention and article 14 of the Istanbul Convention would be taken into account in the preparation of the new teaching materials.

52. The "START — A quality life in safety!" campaign had been conducted in numerous cities with the participation of NGOs and local stakeholders, including the police and school inspectorates, to raise awareness of gender stereotypes and violence against women. Various television debates had been broadcast to draw attention to gender-based discrimination and violence. Some national television channels had very wide coverage and were effective in raising public awareness. There were plans to make further information about gender-based discrimination and violence available to the general public and to amend the law governing audiovisual material.

53. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that 50 per cent of the Romanian population lived in rural areas and that most Roma communities lived in semi-rural or rural areas. Local public policies were in place and social workers or mediators were assigned to assist the Roma communities in accessing work and education and to address the school dropout rate among the Roma. While it was difficult for social workers to reach Roma communities, NGOs provided valuable input, such as data and other concrete measures, and were allocated funds from local budgets where possible.

54. There were no regulations or public debate on the sterilization of Roma women. The position of the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was firmly against the practice.

55. Legislative amendments were to be introduced on emergency protection orders. They would comply with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention and constitute the central pillar of new legislation on domestic violence. Emergency protection orders were distinct from the standard protection orders in force, which were of limited effectiveness. Effective enforcement of the orders required a high degree of coordination, including among the police and judges. To launch the application process for an emergency protection order, a complaint was submitted to the police by the victim, or by a relative or friend, through any communication channel available. The assigned police officer then assessed the severity of the domestic violence and the risk of death of the victim, based on the police officer's interpretation of the situation. Where deemed necessary, an emergency

protection order was issued and the perpetrator immediately removed from the family home. Further restrictive measures could also be imposed on the perpetrator. The police officer handling the case then submitted the assessment to the prosecutor, who referred it to the judge, who drafted a decision on the order. Police officers were being trained to conduct the assessments needed for emergency protection orders, and meetings were being held with relevant officials to explain the legislative amendments and the key role of the police in issuing those orders. It was crucial that all stakeholders were aware of the scope of violence against women in Romania; in 2016, over 10,000 women had reported domestic violence and yet the vast majority of victims did not file complaints. Many victims of domestic violence had died, despite the application of standard protection orders. Two centres had been established for perpetrators of violence who had been removed from their homes. Currently, women victims of violence were only afforded State-funded protection in shelters in their home county, but there were plans to create a network of at least 20 shelters to allow women to seek protection in counties other than their own. It was also important to provide vocational training for victims, particularly in light of the fact that many victims were financially dependent on their spouses, which often forced them to return to their partners.

56. **Ms. Munteanu** (Romania) said that the education curriculum in Romania consisted of a national common core framework and a school-specific element. Modules in the core framework covered stereotypes, civics, cultural identity, rights, discrimination and the values of an intercultural society. In lower secondary school, one of the topics was family life, which included discussions on situations of risk and prevention.

57. Policy papers prepared by the Ministry of Education in 2016 were being implemented with a view to eliminating the segregation of ethnic minority groups in schools. Impact studies had demonstrated the need for further action to combat such segregation, despite the legislation in place. Accordingly, the National Commission for Desegregation and Educational Inclusion would issue annual reports and draw up action plans to promote the concept of inclusive education. The national quality assurance agencies for education were required to develop standards relating to desegregation. In addition, a national plan had been adopted to promote desegregation, which addressed stereotypes and discrimination against the Roma and provided for teacher training on discrimination against the Roma and girls. A national strategy for combating discrimination had been drawn up by the National Council for Combating Discrimination and was due to be adopted shortly. It provided for training and set out various actions to promote equality in schools.

58. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that one Romanian woman was a member of the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee of the European Parliament. The Committee would be submitting a report on gender equality after its visit to the country, and its conclusions would inform the development of institutional measures to improve opportunities for women.

59. **Ms. Dimitrescu** (Romania) said that the National Strategy for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2014-2017 covered the integration of a gender perspective in employment policy and awareness-raising among labour inspectors. It also addressed the work-life balance and gender-based roles in the family.

60. **Mr. Petrescu** (Romania) said that special units were in place in various institutions, including the police and the judiciary, to combat trafficking in persons. The National Agency against Trafficking in Persons coordinated all anti-trafficking efforts at the national level. The Agency's objectives included awareness-raising and combating stereotypes. A recent online campaign, for example, sought to raise men's awareness regarding the use of sex workers. Measures were in place to prevent and combat trafficking for various purposes. In 2016, over 300 sentences had been imposed on perpetrators of trafficking for the purposes of child pornography and labour or sexual exploitation. Police and magistrates were trained to combat trafficking either by their respective institutions or by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons. Specialized police personnel received advanced training in interviewing victims of trafficking in persons. In 2016, a workshop had been led to train relevant officials, such as judges, to deal with victims claiming financial compensation for trafficking.

61. Cases of trafficking in persons with disabilities in Romania usually involved young women with psychological disabilities. Inadequate financial resources for the assistance and protection of those victims, either in special shelters or hospitals, was a cause for concern. While there was no provision for accommodating them in private hospitals, they could be treated through networks established by NGOs. While such organizations were vital to national efforts to counter trafficking, particularly in the area of victim identification, the State continued to play a major role and to provide assistance to victims. Work was being carried out in cooperation with NGOs to develop new indicators for first-response measures in trafficking situations. Prostitution was no longer subject to criminal penalties but was still regarded as an offence and subject to a fine. Labour inspectors in general had not received training in trafficking in persons as that was not the focus of their mandate.

62. **Ms. Drăghici** (Romania) said that the Orthodox Church was a pillar of society in Romania and the majority of the population self-identified as Orthodox Christians. A number of other religions were also recognized in the Constitution. The Church offered support to many communities, particularly vulnerable groups in rural areas. Certain churches provided after-school care, including meals, for vulnerable groups of children, and shelters had been established by churches acting collectively.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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